

► PROSPECTS Africa Forum on Decent Work and Forced Displacement

Synthesis report
21–23 July 2026 | Nairobi, Kenya

1. Context and objectives

The PROSPECTS partnership

The partnership for improving prospects for forcibly displaced persons and host communities (PROSPECTS) is a multi-year, multi-agency initiative supporting host countries in responding to forced displacement through a development-oriented and systems-based approach. Funded by the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the programme brings together five agencies — the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and the World Bank — to promote inclusive access to education, decent work, social protection and essential services for refugees and host communities.

Within the partnership, the ILO leads on employment-related dimensions, with a focus on decent work, labour-market governance, skills development, enterprise development and social dialogue. PROSPECTS seeks to move beyond short-term and parallel interventions by strengthening the national institutions, policies and delivery systems required for sustainable livelihoods and economic inclusion.

The second phase of PROSPECTS (2024–2027) places increased emphasis on policy coherence, system-level change and the sustainability of results. After several years of implementation, the PROSPECTS Africa Forum provided an opportunity to take stock of policy-relevant experience, identify approaches that can be institutionalised and scaled, and define priorities for the remaining period of implementation.

The regional Forum

The ILO convened the **PROSPECTS Africa Forum on Decent Work and Forced Displacement** in Nairobi from 21 to 23 July 2026 as a constituent-facing consultation. It brought together tripartite delegations from Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan and Uganda, as well as representatives of the East African Community (EAC), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) as well as the East African Trade Union Confederation (EATUC). Attendance was deliberately kept limited to maximise the space for dialogue and exchange among constituents. Engagement with PROSPECTS partner agencies, including UNHCR, UNICEF and IFIs, is expected to continue through established mechanisms and follow up at national level.

The programme featured plenary dialogue, thematic exchanges, an interactive exchange of country practice and country policy labs to identify future policy priorities.

The Forum aimed to advance policy-level action for decent employment creation in contexts of forced displacement, with a particular focus on system-level change during the second phase of PROSPECTS. The specific objectives were to:

1. **Take stock of policy-relevant experiences and lessons learned** under PROSPECTS, with emphasis on approaches that have contributed to sustainable employment outcomes for refugees and host communities.
2. **Strengthen tripartite dialogue on employment creation in displacement-affected contexts**, enabling governments and social partners to reflect jointly on policy options, institutional reforms and governance mechanisms.
3. **Identify priority policy areas and opportunities for action** for the remainder of PROSPECTS Phase 2, focusing on reforms and interventions with high potential for system-level impact.
4. **Promote peer learning and regional exchange** by showcasing country experiences and considering how effective approaches can be adapted or scaled in different national contexts.

2. Key messages

Overall message

The Forum signals a transition in the ILO PROSPECTS' work, within the broader Netherlands-funded partnership, from demonstrating inclusive approaches to embedding and scaling them through national institutions and tripartite constituents. The ILO's comparative advantage lies in its normative mandate, tripartite structure, and policy and legal expertise, positioning it to translate operational experience into sustainable policy and systems change. Discussions converged on a clear direction: strengthen national systems that serve refugees and host communities alike, differentiating services according to the barriers faced by different groups rather than creating parallel structures — so that gains in inclusion translate into stronger institutions for everyone they serve.

1. Sustainability requires embedding inclusive approaches in national systems

Following several years of implementation, the sustainability of PROSPECTS-supported approaches will depend on their integration into national institutions, policies, budgets and delivery mechanisms. Refugee inclusion should form part of national employment, skills, enterprise and social protection policies rather than be treated as a temporary assistance measure. This requires government ownership, institutional capacity and sustainable financing alongside sound technical design. Discussions also underlined that refugees and host communities alike are rights-holders and economic actors, whose inclusion strengthens national systems, and contributes to growth and resilience.

2. Strengthening inclusive national labour market systems is central to promoting decent work for all

Refugees and host communities participate in the same labour market. Maintaining parallel labour-market institutions and services for different population groups is neither sustainable nor effective. Refugees should therefore be integrated into national systems, while public employment services, skills and qualifications systems, enterprise support, labour inspection and social protection are strengthened to deliver better services for all.

A common national system does not imply identical services. Delivery should be adapted to the needs and barriers faced by different groups, including youth, women, refugees, persons with disabilities and

other disadvantaged populations. This may require targeted measures addressing legal status, documentation, language, mobility, location, prior qualifications, digital access and discrimination.

3. Skills development must be linked to labour market demand and supported by effective institutions

Training alone is insufficient to secure employment outcomes. Skills investments need to be connected to employer demand, work-based learning, qualifications recognition, employment services and actual job opportunities. Work authorisation, mobility and documentation may remain binding constraints after certification. Employer participation from programme design onwards, combined with post-certification or placement support for recognition of prior learning and apprenticeships, is therefore important. The practices presented—nationally embedded apprenticeships in Uganda, recognition of prior learning in Kenya and Ethiopia, and employer-linked pathways in Egypt—illustrate possible routes from pilot interventions to system reform.

4. Decent work and meaningful social dialogue support social inclusion

Employment expansion should be accompanied by measures to uphold fundamental principles and rights at work, address informality, protect wages, ensure a safe and healthy working environment, and strengthen representation and labour protection. Meaningful social dialogue entails exchange, consultation or negotiation; tripartite participation should lead to substantive engagement. Governments establish the policy and regulatory framework; employers help identify demand and create employment; and workers' organisations support rights, representation and outreach to workers in unregulated work with poor conditions. This tripartite approach supports refugee inclusion, fair competition, labour standards and social cohesion.

5. Digital transformation must form part of the inclusive employment agenda

Digital technologies can expand access to jobs, services and markets, but may also reinforce exclusion where refugees lack digital identification, connectivity, financial access or protection in platform work. Digital and artificial intelligence (AI) policies should therefore integrate infrastructure and skills development with enterprise adoption, worker protection and tripartite governance. In light of the Decent Work in the Platform Economy Convention, 2026 (No. 193), attention should be given to ensuring decent work for digital platform workers, including refugees and members of host communities.

6. Regional cooperation complements national systems on cross-border dimensions

The participation and dialogue with representatives from EAC, IGAD and SADC affirmed that regional economic communities can support policy coherence and interoperability across national systems. Priorities identified for continued dialogue include mutual recognition and portability of qualifications and competences, labour mobility, portability of social protection benefits, cross-border digital work and common minimum standards.

3. Emerging outcomes

The Forum reaffirmed the ILO's comparative advantage in supporting systems change. Drawing on the ILO Guiding Principles, relevant international labour standards, including Recommendation 205 on Decent Work for Peace and Resilience, the ILO brings together policy advice, evidence, international labour standards, institutional capacity development and social dialogue. This provides a basis for

supporting national policy reform and delivery while maintaining complementary roles across tripartite and regional institutions: governments provide coherent frameworks, coordination and financing; employers shape demand-responsive systems and create employment opportunities; workers' organisations promote rights and representation; and regional economic communities advance policy coherence and interoperability.

Country practices provide a basis for adaptation, institutionalisation and scale. The practices presented illustrate how strengthening national systems benefits refugees and host communities alike: Kenya's recognition-of-prior-learning framework, open to all workers regardless of status; Uganda's institutionalised apprenticeship model, which extends both training opportunities and social security coverage to refugee and host community youth; Egypt's integration of refugee inclusion into employment policy and employer-linked training, delivered through the same national mechanisms available to Egyptian jobseekers; Ethiopia's legal reforms, tailored financial products and preparations for refugee inclusion in community-based health insurance; and Sudan's work towards refugee-inclusive TVET and apprenticeship systems. Follow-up should connect relevant practices to country-owned policy processes, responsible institutions, delivery capacity and credible financing pathways.

Sustainability requires a results framework that captures systems change and labour-market outcomes. Participants identified the institutionalisation of inclusive approaches within national systems as an organising principle for the remainder of PROSPECTS Phase 2 and future partnership support. Monitoring should complement direct training and employment results with evidence of institutional reform, national scale, budget integration, access, service quality and multiplier effects. These should be linked to placement, earnings, job quality, social protection and distributional effects for refugees and host communities.

The Forum established a basis for nationally-owned policy pathways shaped through tripartite engagement. The convergence on stronger national labour market institutions, tested practices and implementation constraints enables country delegations to identify feasible policy priorities and near-term actions. Each pathway should specify the responsible institution, operational changes, resource implications, the respective roles of governments and representative employers' and workers' organizations, the first feasible step and support required.

4. Summary of thematic discussions

Skills development

Exchanges on skills development focused on the transition from training to decent work. Representatives from refugees and host communities stressed that skills acquisition is often only one part of the pathway. Work authorisation and permits, documentation, mobility, recognition of qualifications, employer acceptance and access to employment services can continue to prevent certified workers from entering employment or establishing enterprises. Participants therefore called for skills programmes to be embedded in wider labour-market systems and connected to placement, counselling, referral, entrepreneurship and post-certification support.

Country experience illustrated several institutional routes. Kenya's recognition-of-prior-learning framework enables skills acquired through formal and informal pathways to receive nationally recognised qualifications, while work continues on occupational certification and employer recognition. Uganda has institutionalised apprenticeships within government systems; the delegation reported that approximately 75 per cent of participants were retained or transitioned into employment. The Federation of Egyptian Industries reported that approximately 80 per cent of refugees participating in supported

training and apprenticeship pathways moved into employment once skills provision was aligned with enterprise needs and employer concerns were addressed.

The discussion underlined the need for employer engagement from programme design onwards, including demand assessment, workplace learning, mentoring and risk-sharing arrangements. National qualifications frameworks and recognition systems require stronger awareness, consistent implementation and employer acceptance. Regional cooperation can complement national reform by improving the interoperability and portability of qualifications and competences.

Digital economy

The session examined digital transformation through three connected lenses: the digital economy as a source of new work and economy-wide productivity gains; AI as a driver of changes in tasks and job quality; and the platform economy as a growing form of employment across Africa, receiving increased attention also due to the recent adoption of the ILO Convention No. 193 (on Decent Work in the Platform Economy). Digital opportunities extend beyond Information and Communication Technology (ICT) occupations to enterprise adoption, business-process outsourcing, remote services, e-commerce and digital job matching. Access remains constrained by connectivity, devices, skills, finance, legal status, language and digital identification. These barriers are often greater for women, refugees, persons with disabilities, and other disadvantaged groups, and may reinforce existing labour-market inequalities. The discussion took place in the context of the adoption in June 2026 of the Decent Work in the Platform Economy Convention, 2026 (No. 193), the first international labour Convention specifically addressing work in the platform economy.

The ILO scene-setter noted that while 19 per cent of employment in Africa—more than 105 million jobs—has some degree of exposure to generative AI, only 2 per cent is in occupations with significant and high exposure.¹ Consequently, task augmentation is more likely than wholesale job replacement, although outcomes depend on digital infrastructure (such as access to available and affordable high-speed internet), digital skills, enterprise capabilities to adopt digital technologies and economic integration. The required policy response was framed around four connected priorities: connect people and enterprises; equip workers with foundational, occupational and AI literacy; shape enterprise adoption and task redesign; and protect rights and social security through human-centred and tripartite governance.

The tripartite panel highlighted promising practices, including job-search clubs and youth digital hubs in Egypt; responses to changing enterprise skills demand and opportunities for digitally enabled formalisation in Kenya, and worker organisation, digital skilling and technology-enabled agriculture in Uganda. Participants also identified decent work deficits in platform and business-process-outsourcing work, limited worker participation in digital-policy processes, algorithmic bias and deactivation, and barriers to refugee access to digital IDs and financial services. Participants emphasized that governments and employers' and workers' organizations should be meaningfully involved in the design, implementation and monitoring of digital, employment and skills policies. Convention No. 193 provides a reference for evidence-building, tripartite dialogue, informing consideration of ratification and reviewing national laws, policies and programmes with decent work principles.

Social protection

Participants agreed that refugee inclusion is most sustainable — and most equitable for host communities — when refugees are integrated into the same national legal, policy and institutional frameworks that serve citizens, rather than through separate or parallel arrangements. Enabling

¹ ILO (2026): A moment of choice: Harnessing artificial intelligence for decent work. Report of the Director-General.

legislation is essential, but implementation arrangements determine whether rights translate into coverage. Documentation, identification, registration, data sharing, local delivery capacity and accessible information remain major operational bottlenecks.

The discussion also positioned social protection as an enabler of economic inclusion. Access to work, enterprise opportunities and financial services supports participation in contributory schemes, while income security helps people invest in skills, search for work and withstand shocks. Ethiopia is preparing a pilot to include urban refugees in community-based health insurance; Kenya highlighted integrated data, outreach and flexible savings products; Uganda described legislative reforms and voluntary savings pathways; and Egypt presented technical work on refugee inclusion in the Universal Health Insurance System and sustainable financing options.

Government leadership, social dialogue and trusted refugee and community structures were identified as central to implementation and accountability. Sustainable financing remains unresolved in many contexts. Mixed financing models, public budget allocations, employer contributions and progressive beneficiary participation may all contribute, but affordability and national ownership need to be addressed from the design stage rather than after donor-supported pilots end.

Social dialogue

The Forum distinguished meaningful social dialogue from participation in project activities. In line with the ILO definition, social dialogue includes negotiation, consultation and the exchange of information between or among representatives of governments and employers' and workers' organizations on issues of common interest relating to economic and social policy. To be meaningful and effective, it should be inclusive, sustained, based on respect for freedom of association and collective bargaining, and supported by representative, independent and capable employers' and workers' organizations. It can help formulate inclusive employment and social policies, set and apply labour standards, resolve disputes and build consensus where access to jobs, wages and services may otherwise create tensions between refugees and host communities.

The discussions clarified complementary responsibilities. Governments establish and implement coherent legal, policy and institutional frameworks; employers and their organizations identify labour and skills demand, generate employment opportunities and provide workplace learning; workers' organisations organise and represent workers, promote and defend their rights, and extend representation and services to workers facing exclusion or heightened vulnerability. Kenya shared experience of internal reform and youth engagement within COTU-K, Ethiopia highlighted employer mobilisation for work-based learning, and Uganda described the integration of social dialogue into its refugee response. Sudan identified support to institutionalise social dialogue as a priority.

The session also discussed the relevance of international labour standards to refugees and other forcibly displaced persons. Their supervision and implementation provide established entry points for engagement by governments, employers' and workers' organizations. Follow-up should strengthen representative and effective tripartite participation, also creating mechanisms through which refugees and host communities can express their experiences and priorities directly, and address legal, administrative and practical barriers such as discrimination, informality, documentation, restrictions affecting freedom of association, gaps in social security and access to safe and healthy work.

Regional economic cooperation

Representatives of the EAC, IGAD and SADC emphasised that protracted displacement is a development and labour-market issue as well as a humanitarian concern. Regional institutions can use their convening power to promote policy coherence, peer learning and common approaches in areas that extend beyond

national borders. Existing instruments include regional declarations on jobs and self-reliance, mobility frameworks and regional qualifications frameworks with provisions for recognition of prior learning.

The principal implementation gap lies between regional commitments and national legal, policy and institutional implementation. Where relevant, incomplete ratification or formal adoption, institutional fragmentation, limited data, financing constraints and concerns over national sovereignty restrict progress. National qualifications authorities need to engage actively with regional frameworks if portability and mutual recognition are to operate in practice.

Priority areas for continued cooperation include rights-based and refugee-inclusive labour mobility, mutual recognition of qualifications, skills and competences, fair recruitment, portability of social protection benefits, cross-border digital work and effective labour protection in accordance with applicable international labour standards. Participants also warned that informal cross-border recruitment and seasonal work arrangements can expose refugees and migrants to poor conditions and decent work deficits, and create downward pressure on wages and working conditions for all workers. Regional frameworks should therefore be translated into coherent national laws, policies and enforcement arrangements and developed, implemented and monitored through meaningful tripartite social dialogue.

Annex: Agenda

Day 1 – 21 July

Time	Topic
09:00–10:30	Opening session • Ms Caroline Khamati Mugalla, Director, ILO Country Office for the United Republic of Tanzania, Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda • Mr Douglas Opio, Chief Executive Officer, Federation of Uganda Employers • Dr Sherif Masry, President, Egyptian Congress of Trade Unions • Ms Lilian Obiye, Policy Officer – Displacement and Durable Solutions, Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Kenya • Dr Coffi Agossou, Deputy Regional Director for Africa, ILO • Mr Shadrack Mwadime, Principal Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Kenya
11:00–11:20	The PROSPECTS Partnership Introduction to the PROSPECTS partnership, the ILO's role and the strategic priorities for the remainder of Phase 2. • Dr Elizabeth Ann Frantz, Chief Technical Adviser, PROSPECTS Programme, ILO
11:20–12:30	High-level panel: Decent work in displacement contexts A high-level tripartite dialogue on the policy priorities, opportunities and constraints shaping decent work for refugees and host communities. • Mr Abdullahi Mire, Founder, Refugee Youth Education Hub; 2023 UNHCR Nansen Refugee Award Global Laureate • Mr Douglas Opio, Chief Executive Officer, Federation of Uganda Employers • Dr Sherif Masry, President, Egyptian Congress of Trade Unions • Dr Coffi Agossou, Deputy Regional Director for Africa, ILO • State Department for Immigration and Citizen Services, Kenya Moderator: Ms Caroline Khamati Mugalla, Director, ILO Country Office for the United Republic of Tanzania, Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda

14:00–15:30

From Skills to Decent Jobs: Aligning Skills Development Systems with Labour Market Demand in Forced Displacement Contexts

An interactive exploration of how skills recognition, work-based learning and employment services can support transitions to decent employment.

- **Ms Saido Omar Noor**, Programme Lead, Girl Power Action Initiative
- **Mr Loroo Esekoni Emmanuel**, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Turkana Tech Youths Hub; National TVET Ambassador
- **Dr Peter W. Wekesa**, Acting Deputy Director responsible for Qualifications Framework Research and Policy, Partnership and Resource Mobilization, Quality Management Systems and Risk Coordination, Kenya National Qualifications Authority
- **Mr. Zachary Kansiime**, Skills, Technology Uptake and Innovation Officer, Ministry of Gender Labour & Social Development, Uganda
- **Mr. Dawit Moges Alemu**, President, Confederation of Ethiopian Employers' Association (CEEAA), Ethiopia
- **Ms. Rasha Magdy**, CSR Senior Specialist, Federation of Egyptian Industries

Moderator: Mr Stephen Mwangi, National Project Coordinator – Digital Economy, ILO PROSPECTS Kenya

16:00–17:30

Social dialogue as a driver of system-level change

Practical lessons on strengthening social dialogue and tripartite cooperation in displacement contexts. Moderated discussion with representatives governments, of employers' organisation and workers' organisation

Moderators:

Mr Henrik Moller, Senior Specialist for Employers' Activities, Employers Bureau, ILO

Ms Claire La Hovary, Senior Specialist, International Labour Standards and Legal Issues, Bureau for Workers' Activities, ILO

Day 2 – 22 July

Time	Topic
09:00–10:00	Regional cooperation and policy coherence for decent work in displacement contexts A regional discussion on cooperation in the areas of labour mobility, skills recognition, social protection and employment governance. • Dr Dorcas Omukhulu, East African Community • Mr Ipyana Musopole Public Security Officer, Southern African Development Community • Mr Charles Obila Senior Expert on Migration, Intergovernmental Authority on Development Moderator: Ms Caroline Njuki, Chief Technical Adviser, ILO PROSPECTS Kenya
10:00–11:00	Harnessing digital transformation and AI for inclusive employment An interactive discussion on the opportunities and policy safeguards associated with digital skills, artificial intelligence, employment services and platform work. • Mr. Mostafa Ezz el Arab, Associate Minister, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Egypt • Mr Richard Bigriwa, Secretary General, National Organization of Trade Unions • Mr Stephen Obiro, Federation of Kenya Employers Moderator: Mr Jonas Bausch, Youth Employment Specialist, ILO Regional Office for Africa
11:30–12:30	Social protection as an enabler of economic inclusion An exploration of how social protection can reduce risks and support access to employment and livelihoods for refugees and host communities. • Mr Mulualem Desta, Deputy Director, Refugee and Returnee Services, Ethiopia • Mr Nicholas Businge, Programme Officer, NOTU, Uganda Moderator: Ms Angela Atsiaya, Deputy Programme Manager, ILO Ethiopia
14:00–15:30	Marketplace: Stories from the ground – employment initiatives in displacement contexts Country delegations will showcase practical policies and initiatives supporting employment outcomes for refugees and host communities.
16:00–17:30	Designing Future Policy Pathways: A Country Policy Lab for Employment in Displacement Contexts Tripartite country delegations will identify a priority policy challenge and propose a forward-looking policy pathway informed by the Forum discussions. Facilitator: Dr Elizabeth Ann Frantz, Chief Technical Adviser, PROSPECTS Programme, ILO

Day 3 – 23 July

Time	Topic
09:00–10:30	Turning Country Policy Pathways into Feasible Action Country delegations will assess the feasibility of their proposed pathways and identify tripartite roles, support needs and a possible first step within 100 days. Moderator: Mr Jonas Bausch, Youth Employment Specialist, ILO Regional Office for Africa
11:00–12:45	Peer Policy Clinic: Refining Country Pathways Country delegations will exchange structured peer feedback and refine their proposed policy pathways and next steps. Moderator: Mr Evans Iwanga, PROSEPCTS Programme Manager, ILO Uganda
12:45–13:15	Closing session: Take-back reflections and next steps